

ROBERT J. DOLE VAMC | INSIDER



Veteran Bruce Watson prepares to receive the first Dole VA COVID-19 vaccine shot.



RN Bart Ridder receives his shot.



A Hutchinson Veteran gets vaccinated.

DOLE VA BEGINS COVID-19 VACCINATIONS

The Dole VA has administered more than 5,000 doses of the Moderna COVID-19 vaccine to Veterans and employees since the first shipment arrived in late December 2020.

Dole VA nurses began vaccinating Veterans and staff within hours of the vaccine's arrival. Since then, a team of four nurses has given up to 200 doses every weekday and during expanded Saturday clinics.

RN **Jessica Corbett** administered the first shot to 96-year-old Bruce Watson,

a WWII Veteran in the Dole VA Community Living Center.

Corbett said the hard work has been worth it. "The Veterans are thankful and excited," she said.

Medical Center Director **Candace Ifabiyi** said the speedy vaccine distribution so far is just the beginning. As supplies increase, Dole VA care teams will contact an expanding list of Veterans for vaccinations.

"Our ultimate goal is to offer the COVID-19 vaccine to all Veterans who want to be vaccinated," Ifabiyi said.



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MEDICAL CENTER DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

ADAPTING TO THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

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Candace Ifabiyi
MHA, MSBA, PMP

Welcome to the *Dole Insider*!

We will provide a behind-the-scenes tour of the Dole VA and highlight our programs and health care personnel.

COVID-19 dominated 2020, and the rigors of managing a full-blown global pandemic

has inspired our employees to think on their feet, create novel solutions, and expand services.

When all the usual sources of personal protective equipment (PPE) dried up in early 2020 due to high demand, our Logistics Department got creative. They successfully kept clinical personnel stocked with crucial PPE such as masks, shields, gowns, and gloves.

When on-site visits to the Dole VA were curtailed to minimize the spread of COVID-19 infections, we expanded our use of Telehealth services and strengthened electronic communications with our Veterans across the state.

Clinical staff harnessed the power of videoconferencing through computers and smart phones to provide patients with treatments from the comfort and

security of their homes.

We also bolstered our Home Based Primary Care (HBPC) program to better serve Veterans receiving care at home, including delivering the first dose of the Moderna vaccine to a Veteran living in a Medical Foster Home.

While weathering the coronavirus crisis, the Dole VA has continued to grow and increase our Veterans' access to superior health care. We proudly opened a new, state-of-the-art Emergency Department, updated our Surgery Center, and expanded our private inpatient rooms.

We provide exceptional care at the Robert J. Dole VA Medical Center, and we are proud to share our accomplishments in this issue of the *Dole Insider*.

We welcome your questions about life at the Dole VA!

DOLE VA PRAISED FOR COVID RESPONSE



(L-R): Medical Center Director Ifabiyi and SCBC Chairman Pete Meitzner.

Outgoing Chairman of the Sedgwick County Board of Commissioners (SCBC) **Pete Meitzner** presented the Dole VA with the Chairman's Award in recognition of the medical center's contributions to the community during COVID-19.

Commissioner **Jim Howell** said the Dole VA is a tremendous asset to our community. "A lot of states would love to have what we have here in Wichita," he said.

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THE LOGISTICS TEAM GETS CREATIVE ON THE HUNT FOR PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT



(L-R): Material Handlers Keith Ming & Freddie Henderson and Supply Tech Laura Robinson prepare a shipment of supplies.

When COVID-19 spread into a worldwide pandemic in early 2020, hospitals and clinics in the United States began snapping up all the personal protective equipment (PPE) they could find to keep up with the rising number of coronavirus infections.

“The whole world was crazy for PPE, and all the normal suppliers ran out almost immediately,” said Logistics Chief **Ryan Kittrell**.

“PPE items couldn’t be found at any price, so we had to think outside the box,” he said.

Supervisory Inventory Management Specialist **Vince Hodgdon** discovered the Wichita Brewing Company had begun making its own hand sanitizer.

“It was potent stuff, but it did the job, so we managed to procure 800 half-gallon jugs,” he said.

When the usual supplier of disposable face shields ran out,

Logistics partnered with a local welder who could manufacture plastic items with 3D printing.

“He was able to work up a prototype, and we brought samples to the clinicians in the hospital to try,” said Supervisory Inventory Management Specialist **Mike Castillo**. “They loved them, so we mass produced 12,000 single-use face shields.”

Surgical gowns were another scarce item, but the inventory management team found smaller suppliers who hadn’t been emptied of their stock and managed to meet demand.

Last March seems like a blur, Hodgdon said.

“Somehow, we always met our needs, often by the skin of our teeth, but we did it,” he said. “We always came through with what was needed when it was needed. We can all be proud of that.”

Dole VA manufactured 400 gallons of hand sanitizer and 12,000 face shields when sources ran out.



Supply Tech Eric Gardner in PPE.

HOME BASED PRIMARY CARE (HBPC)

DELIVERING QUALITY HEALTH CARE TO VETS AT HOME

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RN Claudia Hurst administers a shot to four-time Purple Heart recipient Buddy Yocam.

More than 300 Veterans receive comprehensive primary care delivered to their homes with HBPC.



An HBPC nurse comforts her patient.

Veterans in our Home Based Primary Care (HBPC) program have complex, chronic illnesses that make it difficult for them to travel to the Robert J. Dole VA Medical Center or one of our Community-Based Outpatient Clinics (CBOCs). In these situations, it is preferred that health care services are provided to patients in their homes.

Over 300 Veterans have enrolled into our program and are assigned a Patient-Aligned Care Team (PACT) that includes

a Physician, Nurse, Nurse Practitioner, Social Worker, Rehab Specialist, Psychologist, Dietitian, and Pharmacist.

The PACT develops a plan of care for the Veteran, managing health care in the home and avoiding long-term care institutions (i.e. nursing homes).

Home Based Primary Care is more than your typical home health care. Normally home health care only provides short-term nursing care and specific services such as wound care or IV therapy.

HBPC provides long-term health care and case management of complex chronic illnesses. It also connects providers with the Veteran's in-home caretaker to meet the patient's individual health care needs.

HBPC Program Manager **Amber Vaughn** said she feels privileged to provide care directly to Veterans in their home.

"You gain a lot of insight to a person's health when you are in their living environment and can see more of the picture," she said.

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CONSTRUCTION AND RENOVATION BUILDING A SOLID FOUNDATION FOR QUALITY HEALTH CARE



NEW EMERGENCY DEPARTMENT

- \$8 million construction
- Opened December 2019
- Expanded from 5,400 sq. ft. to 9,200 sq. ft.
- Treatment capabilities grew from 10,000 to 20,000 Veteran patients per year
- Eleven treatment beds
- Emergency decontamination space



EXPANDED PRIVATE INPATIENT ROOMS

- \$14.6 million project over four phases
- Opened December 2020 with 19 private rooms with bathrooms (Phase One)
- Rooms are capable of providing cardiac monitoring and dialysis procedures
- Heavy duty patient lifts in every room
- Two bariatric rooms and two isolation rooms
- Family spaces integrated into each room



UPDATED SURGERY CENTER

- \$9.4 million in renovations
- Sterile Processing Service expanded from 1,800 sq. ft. to 4,500 sq. ft.
- Two additional 700 sq. ft. Operating Rooms were constructed, bringing the total at the facility to five.



NEW SUBSTANCE ABUSE RESIDENTIAL REHAB FACILITY

- \$5 million construction
- Twelve beds in unit
- Group counseling areas
- Clinical treatment rooms
- Projected to open in August 2021

BUILDING COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

DOLE VA WORKS WITH AREA GROUPS TO SERVE VETERANS

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In an effort to reach more Veterans, the Dole VA has strengthened its collaborations with numerous community organizations.

VETERANS RIDE FREE PROGRAM

The Dole VA worked with Wichita Transit and United Way of the Plains to implement a program allowing Veterans to ride any city bus without charge.

In its debut year of 2020, the Veterans Ride Free Program gave more than 15,000 free rides on city buses to Veterans, and the ridership for January 2021 totaled nearly 3,000 Veterans.

The initiative provides a more important function than simply ferrying Veterans from one location to another.

One Veteran has eliminated food insecurity from her life since

she no longer needs to budget for a monthly bus pass, enabling her to purchase more food.

Another Veteran who had been homeless for thirty years was able to use the bus system to access resources for mental health appointments, to find housing and to fill other critical needs.

He has reintegrated fully into society and reconnected with family after 20 years of estrangement.

DELIVERING FOOD BANK DONATIONS

Working with Disabled American Veterans, we have begun delivering monthly food bank items from two local food pantries to Veterans in our housing programs. More than 100 Veterans have been served to date, and nearly 1,200 deliveries are scheduled through 2021.

HELPING THE NEWLY HOUSED

Our homeless program also benefits from a partnership we enjoy with KanVets and a local American Legion Post to provide household items for Veterans moving from homelessness into permanent housing.

TAKING IN NEW VOLUNTEERS

Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) has been an invaluable source of volunteers and support for the Dole VA.

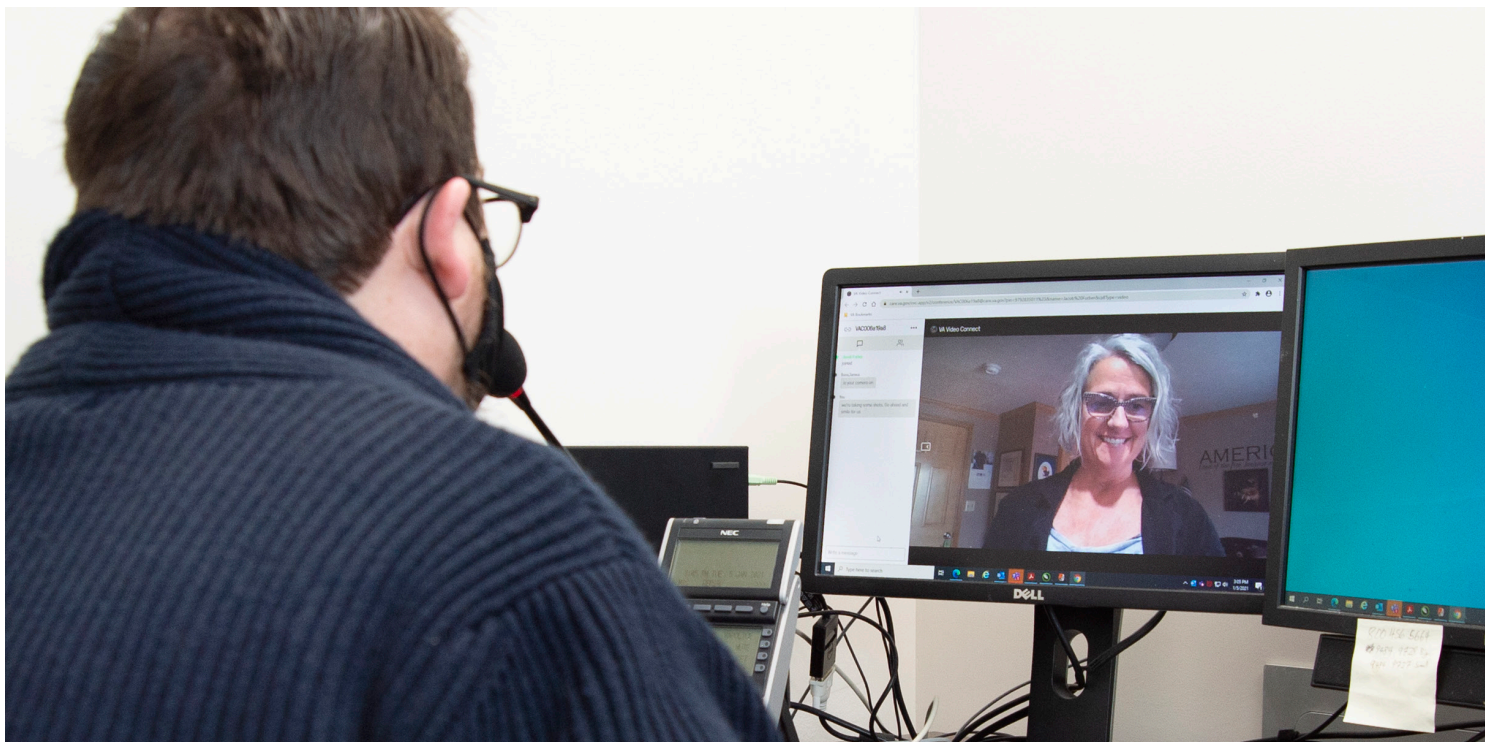
DAR members participate in our Red Coat Ambassador program, visit inpatient women Veterans and even make phone calls on behalf of our Women's Health program. Their donations have impacted many programs ranging from our Medical Foster Homes to Veterans suffering from dementia and Alzheimer's.

The Dole VA partnered with Wichita Transit and United Way of the Plains to provide free bus rides for all Veterans.



COMMUNICATION IN THE AGE OF COVID

MORE VETERANS TAKING ADVANTAGE OF TELEHEALTH



Army Veteran Jacob Furber chats with Dole VA Social Worker Teresa Boos.

When COVID-19 hit in March 2020, the Dole VA Behavioral Health department went virtual.

When broaching the subject of digital communications, Social Worker **Teresa Boos** said she first asks Veterans if they have a personal e-mail account.

“If the answer is *yes*, then we can overcome other barriers such as access to dependable Internet service,” Boos said. “If a Veteran does not have a smart device — like a laptop, tablet, or smart phone — we can provide the device with built-in wifi through the Digital Divide program.”

Boos said once Veterans have a smart device, they need to simply open their email and click on

the link from the Dole VA, after which they will automatically be placed in a virtual room with their clinician.

Telehealth Champion **Cheri Cell** said the Veterans who have tried the new system seem to like it so far, saying it is convenient and easy to use. They also said they feel safer by not exposing themselves to the coronavirus by leaving their own home.

“Telehealth has opened up more opportunities for the Dole VA to reach Veterans, and it improves the continuum of care for them,” Cell said. “The follow-through is better than face-to-face, and Veterans have less anxiety about traveling.”

Nearly 6,500 Veterans — 23% of our patient population — used some form of Telehealth in 2020.



PA Sam Palmer gives advice remotely.

ROBERT J. DOLE VA MEDICAL CENTER

CUTTING-EDGE CARE FOR KANSAS VETERANS SINCE 1933

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The Wichita Veterans Hospital opened on November 16, 1933.

The facility drew rave reviews from *The Wichita Morning Herald*, which called it “the finest plant of its kind in America.”

Renamed in 1991, the **Robert J. Dole VA Medical Center** is a Joint Commission accredited hospital with five Community Based Outpatient Clinics (CBOCs) in Dodge City, Hays, Hutchinson, Parsons and Salina.

The Medical Center is a teaching hospital that provides a full range of patient care services with state-of-the-art technology, including:

- Primary and Specialty Care
- Surgery
- Outpatient Psychiatry
- Physical Rehabilitation
- Cardiology
- Oncology
- Dentistry

We also feature evidence-based services for Low Vision Rehabilitation, Spinal Cord Dysfunction, Traumatic Brain Injury, Pain Management, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, Homelessness, Mental Health Intensive Case Management, Prosthetics/Orthotics, and Extended Care.

In 2020, we served 30,000 Veterans and completed over 350,000 outpatient visits.

When it comes to customer service, our Trust Score exceeded 90%, indicating the vast majority of Veterans visiting the Dole VA trust us for their care.

Our Community Living Center received a 5-star rating for quality, the highest rating possible.

We are committed to providing the highest quality health care and superior customer service to our nation’s Veterans.

Nationally Honored Locally Respected

- **Ranked #1** in the nation for measures reflecting compliance with care known to improve patient outcomes.
- **Ranked #2** in the nation for patient safety indicators, with very low complication rates for hospitalized patients.
- **Ranked #4** in the nation for preventative measures ensuring inpatient safety and wellbeing.